THE ONE RING™

The Adventures

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The Conspiracy of The Red Book

"Then we formed our conspiracy; and as we were serious, too, and meant business, we have not been too scrupulous."

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INTRODUCTION

In a hole in the ground there lived a Hobbit.

This volume contains five adventures, to be played using the pre-generated characters provided in this boxed set. While they can be played as separate scenarios, the adventures can be linked together, allowing the players to explore the width and breadth of the Shire and beyond. They all take place in or around the year 2960 of the Third Age (or 1360 by Shire Reckoning), though the date is flexible and the Loremaster can adjust it if need be.

When run as linked scenarios, the Loremaster should run *A Conspiracy Most Cracked* first, *Involuntary Postmen* as the next to last, and *To Soothe a Savage Beast* as the finale. The remaining adventures can be run in any order.

> The Loremaster can reference the locations detailed in the adventures by consulting the geography section of *The Shire*, and make use of the various suggestions, rules, and tables found therein.

With the exception of *Expert Treasure Hunters* and *To Soothe a Savage Beast*, all adventures share the same approximate level of difficulty.

USING THE PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

Included in this box set are nine pre-generated Player-heroes. Initially, the players may each select one of the six Hobbits: Drogo Baggins, Paladin Took, Rorimac Brandybuck, Primula Brandybuck, Esmeralda Took, and Lobelia Bracegirdle. Loremasters should allow the players the opportunity to review each of these pre-generated characters and choose which one they'd like to play through the scenarios detailed in this book.

As the story unfolds, two new heroes will become available as Player-heroes. The Loremaster is encouraged to keep these new heroes a secret until they become available, so as to not spoil the surprise for the players. These additional pre-generated characters are the Dwarf Balin, son of Fundin, and Bilbo Baggins himself!

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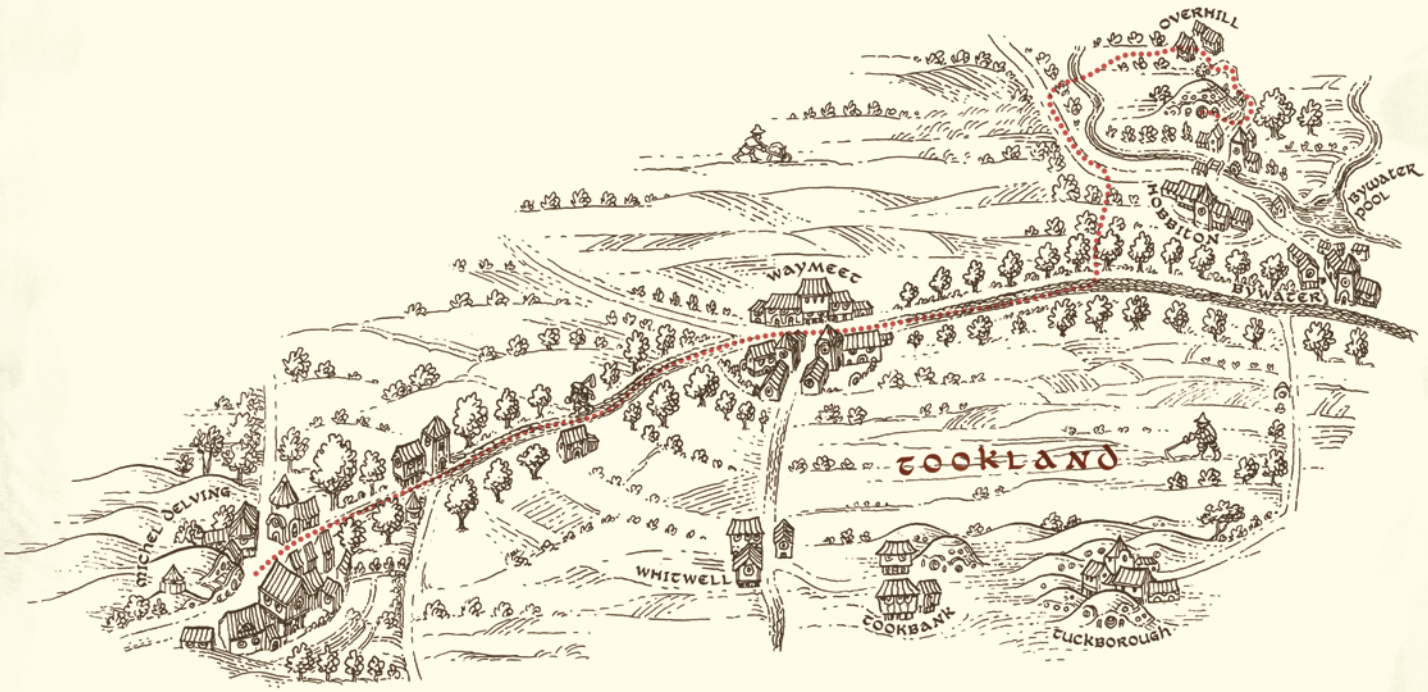
A CONSPIRACY MOST CRACKED

"… we formed our conspiracy; and as we were serious, too, and meant business …"



Mad Baggins is at it again, and has gathered in Bag End a new cabal of adventurous spirits whom he has named the Conspirators of the Red Book (the Player-heroes). In an effort to gather notes for his book, he has asked these friends, under promise of payment and a bit of adventure, to help him confirm some important details about the history of the Shire and its people. The first and most important item is a map of the Shire that is kept locked away in the Mathom-house, at Michel Delving, which he believes was sketched by none other than the Old Took himself! These conscripted conspirators will need to travel there, slip past any watch without arousing suspicion, and pilfer the ancient map before returning to Bag End.

This should be the first scenario run, as it sets the stage for all the others. It occurs during the spring or summer of 1360 Shire Reckoning (2960 Third Age). The action begins at Bag End, and then moves on to Michel Delving and back.

PART ONE: OFF INTO THE BLUE

The first part of this adventure is little more than a Hobbit walking party, an easy entry into the life of an errant adventurer. It will take the Player-heroes over the river west of Bywater and to the village of Waymeet, where they'll need to avoid local gossip mongers.

The Loremaster is encouraged to read or paraphrase the following text to open the adventure.

After quite a long walk under stars that have come out blazing and bright after an afternoon of heavy rain, you've finally come to the round green door of Bag End, the home of the strange and famous Bilbo Baggins. Standing there upon the mat, you find yourself surrounded by distant relations. It seems as though Bilbo called for a collection of cousins to join him this evening. Just as one of you is about to ring the bell, the door is pulled open and you see standing in the front hall none other than Master Baggins himself. He offers each of you an energetic greeting and quickly ushers you in with a plethora of welcomes, thank yous, and lovely to see yous.

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Before you can gather your wits about you, you've been swept into the warm embrace of Bag End, and led into the parlour where a lovely fire, fresh mugs of ale, plates of dainties, and several cushioned chairs and sofas offer a much-needed spot of rest and relaxation. Bilbo, a twinkle in his eye, ushers you each into a seat but takes none for himself. A few moments after you've finished the first plate of food, the obviously excited Master Baggins can no longer contain himself. He places one hand behind his back and another in his vest pocket, standing tall to ensure he has your attention.

"You are all, undoubtedly, curious as to why I've called you here this evening. Well," he leans in, the firelight causing the twinkle in his eye to dance merrily. His hand sweeps from behind his back towards the parlour window. "I am hoping you will partake in a little adventure! Nothing so grand as my own, I'm afraid: but in return for your aid, I will provide each of you with a place in my memoirs, and a fair share of my eternal gratitude."

He grabs a glass of wine off the table and takes a sip, pausing for effect. "Now, I know what you're thinking: 'There goes Old Bilbo again, taking after that Wizard Gandalf and sending you Hobbits off into the blue. Well, I can assure you it is nothing of the sort. Just a little trip to Michel Delving and back to recover what one might call a family heirloom from the Mathom-house: a map of the Shire supposedly made by the Old Took himself, with all sorts of precious annotations. Now, I've sent many letters to the custodian, Malva Slowfoot, asking if I could have it back, even offering fairly generous donations: but for some reason, she has provided no replies.

So, I thought that we needn't tell her or her husband — after all, we're talking about something that belonged to my grandfather, and that would not be out of place here, in Bag End. Most of all, we needn't alert that pesky dog that the Slowfoots have set to guard the place! Sharp as a tack, that beast, and he sniffs me out every time I've come near. Besides, I know some of you place more value on local gossip than others — and even just being seen at night in the Company of 'Mad Baggins' might be enough to ruin your reputation forever. But for those of you with spirit — which I know you all have in spades, or I'd have not called you here tonight — won't you aid me on this errand of particular importance, my fellow conspirators?"

Bilbo Baggins

Bilbo will offer each of them a fine night's rest in one of the many spare bedrooms of Bag End, and a hearty breakfast, before telling them he plans on sending them out the door after second breakfast.

To keep the trip away from the prying eyes of the nosy Hobbits of Hobbiton and Bywater, Bilbo has laid out a path for the conspirators, instructing them to head north from Bag End into Overhill and turn west across the country for a few miles, before crossing a shallow point in the Water. Then, after crossing the Bywater Road, they will reach the East Road and set out west towards Waymeet, where they'll take rest for the evening before arriving at Michel Delving the next day.

GETTING ACROSS THE WATER

The morning dawns bright and clear, perfect for a nice walk about the Shire. The first true obstacle reveals itself soon after they leave Overhill — the Water has become swifter with recent rain, and the shallow ford where Bilbo told them to cross looks a bit more treacherous.

The Player-heroes must now consider their circumstances and find a solution.

Crossing the Water requires an **ATHLETICS** roll. Player-heroes who pass it with one or more ᘔ icons swim across with flair, or can help others who find it harder to make their way across. Hobbits who fail their **ATHLETICS** roll return to the near bank, coughing and spluttering, and fully soaked.

If the Player-heroes look for other means of crossing, a successful **SCAN** roll allows them to spot a large hollow log on the other side of the Water, which could easily bear the weight of a Hobbit.

To retrieve the log, the Hobbits must summon their adventurous side and get inventive.

For example, the feat can be accomplished by using a rope and hook (a **CRAFT** roll) or even by shooting an arrow with an attached line (a **BOWS** roll). Success means that they manage to get a good hold on the log and can easily pull it to themselves. Another way could be to have the best swimmer among them get to the other side, fetch the log and swim back.

Dry or soaked, the Hobbits will eventually find a way, and reach Waymeet after a good walk on the East Road.

WELL MET IN WAYMEET

Waymeet itself is quite active on the evening when the Player-heroes arrive, as the tables set outside the Walking Party Inn are still occupied, thanks to the fair weather and lengthening daylight hours. The locals are polite, though very curious about what brings a crowd of Hobbits so diverse this far west at such a late hour.

Avoiding inquiries as to the nature of their business without offending the locals can be done with a successful **RIDDLE** roll. On a failure, they reveal a bit too much about their involvement with Mad Baggins, and the conversation soon dries up, among puzzled and disapproving looks.

Finding lodging for the night proves a little harder… It seems that all beds at the Walking Party Inn are taken, booked by a group of pipe-weed merchants headed for Longbottom. Asking around, they are pointed to a local farmer, one Baldo Bunce, who appears to have some spare room in his stables. Bunce offers to let the Player-heroes sleep in his premises (which are comfortable enough, given the warm nights and soft hay) — but only if they can drive off a huge and menacing owl that's been troubling Gertrude, his poor old plow mule.

If the players accept, Bunce offers to pay for their meal that night at the Walking Party, before leading them to his farm, less than a quarter mile south of the Waymeet crossroads. He shows them into the barn and then brings them blankets, along with a small basket of some leftover bread and ale from the afternoon as an evening snack. Baldo never noses into their business and apologizes profusely for his lack of hospitality, saying he doesn't have much room inside his small cottage. Nevertheless, he fully expects them to have that damned owl gone by morning. When Baldo is done talking, an eerie hoot rings out through the barn, as if on cue, and the tiny mule sitting idly in the rear of the place stirs.

The Player-heroes can get rid of the great owl if they politely inform him with a **COURTESY** roll that there are no more mice in the barn and that he's bothering Gertrude. If the roll is passed, the owl flies off almost as if he understood them. Alternatively, an **AWE** roll can serve as a form of intimidation, as will a **HUNTING** roll.

If the large bird is scared off rather than politely urged, it leaves, but first looks pointedly from the Player-heroes to Gertrude, the mule, and hoots at her to which she replies with a brief bray. It seems almost as if the two are talking! The owl is commenting to the mule about how he was treated by the Player-heroes and will inform the other animals he knows about these rude Hobbits (the Loremaster should remember to make any future interactions with the beasts of the Shire more difficult).

The rest of the evening passes uneventfully, and a few minutes after the rooster crows, Bunce wakes the characters and bids them a polite but firm farewell.

PART TWO: MATHOMS OF MICHEL DELVING

Setting out from Waymeet, the conspirators will arrive at Michel Delving by the end of the day. Here, they will begin their adventure in earnest, having to confusticate Bounders, confuse custodians, and face curious canines as they attempt the clandestine recovery of the Old Took's map from the Mathom-house. Once the deed is done, they'll need to make a hasty retreat from Michel Delving before their dubious activities are noticed!

After a bit of a stiff sleep in Bunce's barn and a long westward walk, the conspirators finally reach the edges of Michel Delving upon the White Downs. The Loremaster may read or paraphrase the following text.

You pass the spot where a southward path leads off from the main course of the East Road, just as the sun sets and the first stars begin to reveal themselves. Ahead, you get a good look at Michel Delving upon the White Downs. Quite a bit larger than Hobbiton, it is a tightly packed collection of homes built of wood, brick, and stone, and the occasional Hobbit-hole. But as the last of its people go about

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their evening business, your eye cannot help but be drawn to the massive smial to one side of the great cobblestone thoroughfare running through the centre of town: the Town Hole, seat of the Mayor of the Shire.

But more important to your business is what lies south of the Town Hole, on an adjacent hillock not quite so tall and green — it is a large wooden building with a great red round door that is connected to the main road by way of a small stone path. This is the Mathom-house, the museum of the Shire, your destination.

As candles flicker to life behind windows, and Hobbitfolk settle in for the evening, you notice a handful of Hobbits carrying stout cudgels and tiny lanterns strolling about. Bounders, undoubtedly making their usual rounds. Best to avoid them, though, lest your mischief be discovered and thwarted.

BURGLARS IN MICHEL DELVING

The conspirators face their greatest challenge so far — to reach the Mathom-house without anyone noticing, and to gain access to it.

To get up to the Mathom-house without the Bounders noticing requires each character to pass a **STEALTH** roll. Failure means a Bounder approaches and questions them.

The Bounder approaching the conspirators is Ada Burrows, a young and enthusiastic Hobbit from Little Delving. This is one of her first assignments, and she takes her duty to ask questions of wanderers found outside after nightfall very seriously.

Convincing Ada that they are doing nothing untoward requires the Player-heroes to make a roll of **PERSUADE** — or **RIDDLE**, should they try to confuse her with clever words or distractions.

Failing to convince Ada worsens the conspirators' predicament considerably — the Bounder questions them extensively before she lets them go, and then she walks to the Mathom-house and locks the front door! Now it will be impossible to gain entrance through it.

Inspecting the grounds surrounding the Mathom-house for other ways to enter reveals that, though the door is locked and the windows barred, there is a small skylight opening on the roof. Additionally, at some distance from the Mathom-house and sticking out of the side of the hill upon which the museum sits is an old door that may lead into the basement of the establishment.

Climbing up to the roof requires a roll of **ATHLETICS**. Failure results in a fall causing the loss of 3 Endurance points. If two or more Player-heroes fail the roll, they get caught up in a tumbled mess and everyone lands with a loud clatter that alerts the surprise guest waiting inside!

Once up there, the conspirators find the skylight to be unlocked. Landing safely on the floor inside the main hall of the Mathom-house requires a second **ATHLETICS** roll (for the consequences of failure, see above).

Characters choosing to try the door on the side of the hill find that it leads to a narrow, cluttered underground chamber, a basement filled with all kinds of forgotten trinkets and thick cobwebs. In fact, a small pack of rats has taken up residence here, fearful of the guardian that lives on the ground floor.

Scaring the rats off causes them to scurry away noisily and awaken the guard dog: avoiding this requires a successful **STEALTH** roll.

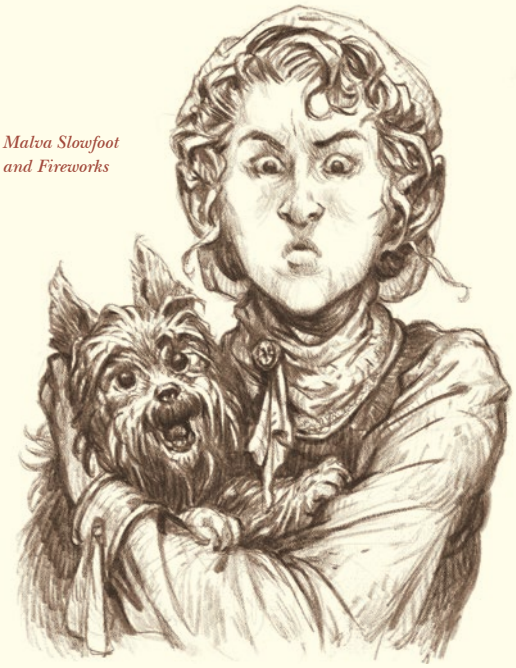
A trapdoor leading into the Mathom-house opens in the ceiling of the cellar, above a massive pile of antique pots and pans. To move them aside carefully requires another successful **STEALTH** roll, lest they clatter to the floor and make all manner of noise (and awaken the guardian).

THE MATHOM-HOUSE, INSIDE AND OUT

Whether they entered the Mathom-house by way of the unlocked main door, or through the roof or the basement, the conspirators find themselves inside a great, high-ceilinged series of rooms, containing an impressive display of artefacts from across the history of the Shire. Shelves of books chronicling family genealogies and recipes passed down for generations line the walls, while a set of perfectly polished diamond studs are set on a pedestal under glass, and a pair of strange crossed walking sticks are mounted on one wall. Countless other knick-knacks and mathoms are on display. From old brass buttons mounted on a velvet board, to a gleaming coat of silver rings set to rest on a post in the corner. Though a wonder to behold, it is going to take a bit of doing to find the Old Took's map in this collection!

But the most concerning sight appearing in front of the searching conspirators as they enter is the grey and brown furred terrier, the fearsome guard dog kept by Malva the custodian! If the Player-heroes gained access to the museum without making noise, the dog is curled up asleep under a writing desk, letting out heavy snores. If they made noise entering, the terrier (whose name is "Firework") is well awake.

Tendar Mithril (order #3630051)



Malva Slowfoot and Fireworks

If the dog is asleep, the Player-heroes may search for the map, but must do so quietly. This requires three successful SCAN rolls — failing twice means they make noise. Once three successful rolls are achieved, the conspirators locate the Old Took's map — buried behind a stack of cookbooks on the bottom shelf of one of the bookcases. It is in surprisingly good condition, if a bit creased.

If the dog is awake, or if the Player-heroes rouse him by failing two SCAN rolls, the dog eyes them before letting out an inquisitive bark. He is not fierce, but friendly and energetic. Unfortunately, he expresses his excitement at having found new friends by barking. Calming the dog requires a COURTESY roll. If the roll succeeds, then the dog is lulled back to sleep for the entire search.

If Firework is not pacified, his barking rattles the nerves of the conspirators, who fear the noise will draw the attention of some local Hobbit — a Bounder, or, worse, a Shirriff!

Actually, no one is alarmed by Firework's antics, and the only consequence of his barking is that the improvised burglars all lose 1 point of Hope due to fear of being discovered!

SLIPPING OUT OF TOWN

Once they have what they came for, the conspirators can easily unlock the front door from the inside and escape.

If Firework has been alerted, slipping out of Michel Delving will require some further planning to avoid someone noticing a group of sneaking Hobbits followed by a barking dog. If the Player-heroes are not wary on the way out, a Bounder or two might still notice them slip away, and remember their faces in days to come.

Finally, if they were not explicitly careful, the conspirators have in all likelihood left evidence that something is missing from the Mathom-house. By mid-morning of the next day, the news that someone broke into the Mathom-house is all over Michel Delving, and within a few more it spreads across the Westfarthing.

STEALING MATHOMS

The Loremaster is encouraged to remind any players who bring up the idea of purloining any of the more choice mathoms in the Mathom-house that such behaviour is unbecoming of a respectable Hobbit. It's one thing to take something on a mission sponsored by Bilbo Baggins himself, but quite another to take advantage of the situation! Characters that even bring up such an act should be ashamed of themselves.

Epilogue

Once the conspirators return to Bag End, the Loremaster should read the following text:

After your successful recovery of the Old Took's map of the Shire and swift journey home, you're greeted by the green door of Bag End being thrown open like a pop gun to reveal a grinning Bilbo standing on the doorstep, walking stick in hand. "You found it! Wonderful, simply wonderful!"

Though eager, Bilbo ushers you in with a hasty wave of his hand. "Come on, we'll need to review my grandfather's map quickly tonight if we're to set off on our next adventure! This remarkable find of yours makes me believe I'm quite ready for another adventure!"

Bilbo and the other conspirators can relax for a time. Bilbo prepares a fine meal for everyone and asks about the whole affair. After hearing the story, he cannot help but laugh, adding that he is ready to join them on their next adventure!

Bilbo Baggins is now available to be chosen as a Player-hero for the next adventure! The Loremaster should give everyone in the play group the opportunity to choose the veteran burglar as their character.

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EXPERT TREASURE HUNTERS

Old Took's great-granduncle Bullroarer … charged the ranks of the goblins of Mount Gram in the Battle of the Green Fields, and knocked their king Golfimbul's head clean off with a wooden club.

His passion for history reignited by recent events, Bilbo studies the Old Took's map and discovers a clue concerning the whereabouts of the lost club of the Bullroarer. At once, he organizes a trip into the Northfarthing, where the clue seems to point. After questioning the Hobbits of Oatbarton, the quest leads them further into the North Moors, and deeper into danger.

This adventure can be played at any time after the events of *A Conspiracy Most Cracked*, but before *Involuntary Postmen*. If played in sequence, it is now the spring of the year S.R. 1360.

PART ONE: ON THE ROAD AGAIN

With their efforts to purloin the Old Took's map having been successful, Bilbo is delighted. He invites everyone to stay for several days as his guests at Bag End, during which time they live in the lap of luxury. Though they never want for food and drink, Bilbo remains locked up in his study, before eventually coming out on the afternoon of the second day.

Popping out of his study like a cuckoo from a clock, Bilbo rushes into the parlour where you are all relaxing after a fine second breakfast, map still clutched in his hand. "My wonderful friends! You won't believe what I've found on the Old Took's map: I believe I know where the club of Bandobras Took is located! Or at least the Old Took did. Or rather he thought he did. Maybe he wasn't sure." He shakes his head, as if to physically force the rambling thoughts from his head. "Never you mind. I might need to do a bit more research, but I was hoping for — nay, counting on your help once again!"

"After hearing all about your little adventure in Michel Delving, I'd like a taste of adventure myself. It says here on the map that the club of the Bullroarer may be somewhere around the village of Oatbarton, in a place called Kingsworthy! Exciting, isn't it? So, I was thinking perhaps in return for my generous hospitality, we could take a walk north and do a bit more investigating into the matter. Imagine it, being credited with being the Hobbits who found the club of Bullroarer Took! Wait right here, I'll run and get you the right gear to suit a proper adventure!"

And like that, Mad Baggins disappears in a flash around the corner before returning as you all exchange looks of excitement and confusion. He drops a large chest before you, and smiles. "There you are! Take what you need. There's no knowing where we'll be swept off to!" He turns to dash off again but turns around back to you, almost laughing at his own forgetfulness. "I've muddled my wits, staying up all night making a copy of the Old Took's map. No need to damage the original, after all!" He shoves the fresh copy at you before throwing open the front door to Bag End and stepping out onto the road. "Come on!" he cries, "We'd best be off!"

BILBO'S GEAR

Before setting out for Oatbarton, the characters can draw from the equipment contained in the old trunk provided by Bilbo. It contains basic travelling gear such as cloaks, backpacks, pocket handkerchiefs, other standard supplies, and few battered weapons. Among the weapons are three clubs which can also serve as walking sticks, a pair of small hunting bows left behind by Dwarvish visitors (with arrows), a short sword he had used for decoration instead of warfare, a small axe for cutting wood, and one dagger for each of them. Sting is not among the weapons, as it is carried by Bilbo.

OATBARTON INVESTIGATION

To go to Oatbarton, the conspirators must first take the road to Bywater to the south, and reach the East Road. Then, they enter the Eastfarthing leaving behind the Three-Farthing Stone, and take the Northway Road to their left. It's more than a leisurely stroll to reach Oatbarton, taking more than three days on average, but searching for the fabled club of Bullroarer Took is certainly worth the effort (to enliven the journey, the Loremaster can use the rules for Hobbit Walks found on page 10 of *The Shire*).

It's almost midday when the conspirators catch sight of the first houses of the village. It is spring, but the last hints of winter still nip at their toes, making them particularly eager for a hearty meal. Even before they take their first steps into the cobblestone courtyard that serves as the heart of the village, they catch the scent of roast chicken and potatoes! The hard-working farmers of Oatbarton are gathered in the centre of their village for their lunch, sitting at long tables, shaded by large pavilions and tents. The search for the famous war hero's great club can wait…

The villagers are happy to share their lunch with the Player-heroes, and as soon as they place a plate in front of each of them, they start asking questions about what their business may be so far north. Luckily for them, they are not shy about answering questions themselves, especially if they concern local history.

> Gathering information about the Bullroarer and a place called Kingsworthy requires 3 successful Skill rolls, using **AWE**, **COURTESY**, **ENHEARTEN**, **PERSUADE**, or **RIDDLE**.

The conspirators can pose their questions in any way they see fit, but any Player-hero who fails a roll cannot make any more rolls to inquire further. The Loremaster can spread the information described below among the Player-heroes, so that each of them uncovers a new clue and they can piece together the information as a group.

- Upon a first success, the Player-heroes learn that the 'Kingsworthy' is an abandoned structure, about a day's travel into the North Moors.
- A second success allows the Player-heroes to learn that some of the rowdier local children play a game called "Bullroarer's Club" that seems to involve them roughing up one another with a stick from the field they claim to be the artefact.
- A third and final success means they hear some rumours about a ghost haunting the abandoned Kingsworthy.

KINGSWORTHY

Kingsworthy can be reached by taking a northward path from Oatbarton, and walking for a full day across the North Moors (see also *The Shire*, page 30 and beyond, for more about Kingsworthy and travelling across the North Moors).

> Once it is in sight, the Player-heroes may attempt to identify the purpose of this large stone house and round tower with a roll of **LORE**. On a success, they conclude that it might have been a hunting lodge at the time of the Kings in Norbury.

Upon a closer inspection, the conspirators find the place to be deserted. They find evidence of it having been used as a shelter by wanderers, but it certainly isn't inhabited regularly.

> They spot a fresher set of tracks. A successful roll of **SCAN** reveals that they quite clearly belong to one or more Hobbits.

But the most important find of the day is that no club hangs over the large mantelpiece of Kingsworthy, but probably used to. Above the cold fireplace is a large wooden plaque, bearing the signs of having been used to display a long object, as tall as a Hobbit.

> Careful examination and a successful **CRAFT** roll reveals that something was mounted on the plaque and was removed. A wooden chair sits near the fireplace, as if someone used it to reach the spot above the mantelpiece.

Could the club have been stolen recently?

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TRACKING A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

The most likely course of action for the Player-heroes is to set themselves to following the tracks they identified inside Kingsworthy. Luckily for them, they are easily followed, as the individual leaving them is moving with great haste.

Unbeknownst to the conspirators, they are following the tracks of one Mort Mudfoot, a farmer of Oatbarton. He is after his daughter Myrtle, who disappeared yesterday after having heard everyone in town talking about the club of the Bullroarer — a very competitive player of Goblin Nocking, a game involving balls, holes and the use of clubs, Myrtle left town with the intention of securing for herself the 'most famousest' club in Hobbit history, before some stranger took it. Thinking this 'Kingsworthy' place to be much closer to her home, she pressed on anyway, until she reached it, finding that a club was indeed hanging over its mantelpiece. Having found her prize, she took it and set off on her way home. She is now wandering across the North Moors, her father looking for her.

> The Player-heroes can catch up with the beleaguered father by succeeding in 3 **HUNTING** rolls. When they do so, they spot the lean, brown-haired Hobbit, desperately following the tracks of his daughter as fast as he can find them.

If asked about the club of the Bullroarer, Mort will say he doesn't know anything about it but that Myrtle does love to play Goblin Nocking with the other children, and that must be why she came all the way out here this morning. A life-long resident of Oatbarton and a reasonable Hobbit in his sixties, Mort is beside himself with concern. Myrtle is his only child, and he fears even returning home to tell his wife Marigold that she is missing because of how panicked she will become.

Determined to find her no matter what it takes, Mort will accept any help he is offered. He will tell little stories about his daughter to any of the Player-heroes that will listen. He speaks of how adventurous she has always been, her love of the stories of the Bullroarer, and how she dreams of exploring places beyond Oatbarton.

PART TWO: SHADOWS AND RUMOURS

The quest for the club of the Bullroarer has led the Player-heroes into the North Moors, and now they are out there at night, in search of a missing Hobbit girl. As they scour the land, strange and potentially dangerous obstacles reveal themselves.

Myrtle Mudfoot

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

The night is clear and cool. A waxing moon and a veritable symphony of starlight offers some light as you trek across the lightly rolling landscape. But this is no well-trodden road. The ground is uneven, and your foot can easily be caught in a hole or your legs grow weary as you plod through the moss-covered terrain. A long yawn escapes your mouth and you fight off the weight of your own eyelids — all the while searching for signs of the wayward Hobbit lass. Even in this dim evening light, the growing concern is evident on Mort's drawn face.

> The Player-heroes are pressing into the small hours of the night, without any real opportunity to rest or recover. As such, they all gain 3 Fatigue Points. They can reduce the gain with a **TRAVEL** roll (a success reduces the total Fatigue of a Player-hero by 1, plus 1 point for each Success icon ᘐ).

INTO THE NORTH MOORS

As the Player-heroes scour the North Moors for some sign of Myrtle, the Loremaster should ask them how they are going about doing so, and determine which skill is appropriate based on their preferred methods.

Those attempting to identify an area where she may have tried to find shelter in the night may make an **EXPLORE** roll.

Characters looking for signs of where Myrtle may have wandered in this wide landscape can make a **HUNTING** roll.

Those looking for signs of anything out of the ordinary can attempt a **SCAN** roll.

EXPLORE. Clever Player-heroes may consider that Myrtle must have sought shelter somewhere in the wilderness instead of wandering around in the dark. With a successful roll, the Player-heroes do indeed discover the remnants of a camp, but only with one or more Success icons ᛉ do they notice that it's set up so skilfully that it can't be the work of a child. It even has a small fire pit, hand dug and ringed with stones.

HUNTING. A success allows the Player-hero to notice that Myrtle's meandering set of tracks is not leading her back to Oatbarton. She is definitely lost. One or more Success icons ᛉ allows the characters to recover a tiny scrap of a pretty yellow dress, which Mort confirms as being a colour that matches the one Myrtle was last seen wearing.

SCAN. A success reveals that there is another set of tracks following those of Myrtle. With one or more ᛉ icons, the tracks are identified as large, booted footprints that do not belong to any Hobbit.

Following this last set of tracks is easier than expected, and does not require any further rolls. If the Player-heroes follow, after a while they even seem to be able to make out the silhouette of a wanderer just on the edge of their vision, always barely in sight. Player-heroes succeeding in a roll of **RIDDLE** realize that, given the figure's long stride and apparent skill at woodcraft, it is likely remaining in sight intentionally and actually leading them.

A FATHER'S AID

Mort can help the Player-heroes. He is sharp-eyed – One single Player-hero searching for evidence of Myrtle *gains (1d)* to their rolls.

PART THREE: DAWN BE STONE!

The climax of this adventure occurs once the Player-heroes follow the tracks they are after to the edge of a wide patch of shrubland, where an unexpected adversary hides among ancient ruins.

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

Hours of pursuit mean that when you see the darker patch of bracken and heather ahead, the sky has started to turn from the deep blackness of night into the deep blue of the hours before dawn. You've followed Myrtle's tracks for miles now. You've little doubt that she came this way. As you get closer, you start noticing that the dark patch is not due simply to a different vegetation — there are ancient stones jutting out of the ground, low crumbling walls hinting that this once was a very different place. A fort, a town maybe. Few Hobbits have seen this place, and as you take your first steps forward among the stones, stories of kings and armour-clad warriors fill your mind.

Just as you and your fellow conspirators are about to explore the heather-covered ruins, a rumbling growl seems to rise from the ground itself! It's a bellowing shout bearing some resemblance to human speech, echoing among the ancient stones. You then hear a high, panicked voice call out from nearby: "Shoo you old Troll! Go away! Go!" Breaking through a thicket of brambles, you see none other than Myrtle Mudfoot, who has scrambled up a ruined wall and is swinging a heavy wooden club at a massive creature looking like the grotesque imitation of a large Man — it's a Stone-Troll! Between the two of them, leaning wearily against a wall, is a cloaked stranger, hood thrown back to reveal the rugged face of a Man with grey eyes, clutching a large, bleeding gash across his shoulder that has all but incapacitated him as he desperately tries to keep the monster from reaching the child. The Troll is clearly angry, and does not seem to have noticed you and your companions. Myrtle, on the other hand, sees you and immediately cries out for help.

Fighting an angry Stone-Troll is quite a dangerous endeavour, as the cloaked stranger has just found out. The creature is large and powerful, but quite stupid. If the Player-heroes take on the Troll head to head, he fights ferociously, though he flees once he's Wounded or has lost half of his Endurance.

If the Player-heroes attempt to trick the Troll with some clever stratagem, they may succeed in buying enough time and allow the light of the dawn surprise the creature.

Teodor Milan Iancu #3151915

To trick the Troll, the Player-heroes need to accumulate at least three successful Skill rolls, using **HUNTING**, **RIDDLE**, or **SONG**. The Troll hesitates, confused, and does not attack for as long as the Player-heroes succeed at their rolls. Upon the first failure, the Troll becomes enraged and attacks the nearest Hobbit with a *Favoured* attack roll (no more attempts at trickery are allowed).

If the Player-heroes achieve three successful Skill rolls, the Troll is surprised when the first rays of the sun hit the clouds above — suddenly terrified, the Stone-Troll breaks away from the fight, looking for shelter. If the Skill rolls achieved two or more Success icons ᘓ, the Troll is completely caught unawares by the dawn, and is turned to stone on the spot!

JACK, THE STONE-TROLL

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL	ENDURANCE	PARRY	ARMOUR
8	34	+1	3

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Crush 2 (6/12)

Epilogue

With Myrtle rescued, she is delivered by the wanderer and the Player-heroes back to her father Mort, who rejoices. It is then that the cloaked Man reveals his identity.

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

Throwing back his hood, with one arm clutching his shoulder, the cloaked wanderer reveals himself. He has long grey-brown hair and bright, steely eyes. He smiles through the pain of the wound he suffered at the claws of the Troll. "It is not often that I find myself needing protection. Less often that it should come in the form of you little, wondrous folk. It would seem I still have much to learn."

"My name is Halbarad, and I am a Ranger, although that title may not tell you much. Suffice it to know that I, like yourselves, was searching for young Myrtle for two

reasons. First, for fear that she might find true danger. Second, because she took something I was meant to guard. I certainly didn't expect a burglar like Myrtle, and she fooled me."

"What Myrtle took from Kingsworthy is indeed a rare relic, a token of an ancient past, best forgotten. It was hidden in plain sight, and has remained safe for a long time, until today. But now I think I have found someone worthy of its safekeeping. I think that if you have it, it may be in better hands than mine." He chuckles softly and his hard eyes brighten a bit. "Now, if you would be so kind as to see the Mudfoots home, I am certain they have a fine meal waiting for them. I have wounds to tend to, but I hope this will not be our last meeting." He turns without waiting for a reply, and in a matter of seconds the shadows of the heath swallow up the Ranger as if he were one of their own, and he is gone.

Once back at Oatbarton, Mort explains to his wife Marigold what happened. She chastises him as only a wife worried sick can, but prepares a grand feast for everyone as a thank you for their efforts. After a fine meal and a long sleep, the Player-heroes can begin their journey back to Bag End, with the club of the Bullroarer hidden among their gear.

To their surprise, as they come up the lane of Bagshot Row, they see a Dwarf in a red hood peeking into the window of Bag End. He turns at their approach and casts off the hood, revealing a keen smile and a long white beard.

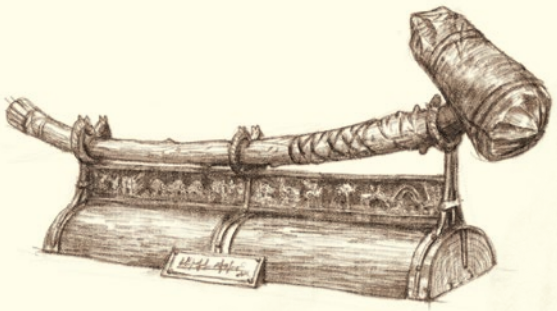
"Bilbo, you old rascal! You told me to drop by for tea any time and here I am!" The Dwarf pauses with a grin and collects himself before offering a polite smile. "Forgive my exuberance. Balin, son of Fundin, at your service." With a bow, he casts a knowing smile at Bilbo, "What kind of trouble have you gotten yourself into this time, my little burglar?"

Balin, son of Fundin is now available to be chosen as a Player-hero for the next adventure. Having just arrived for tea, he's glad to help out his friend's fellow conspirators with whatever local trouble they get themselves into.

Balin, son of Fundin

THE BULLROARER'S CLUB

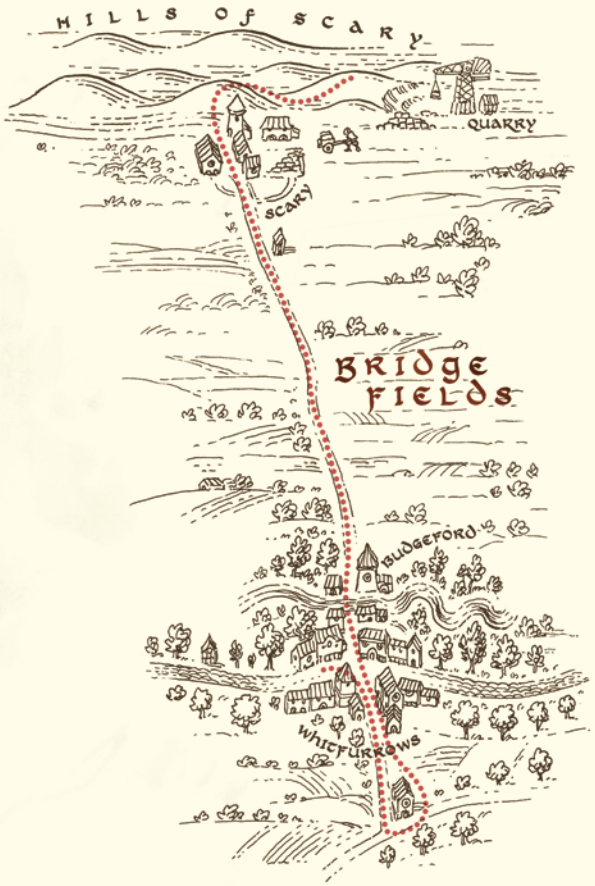
Bandobras "Bullroarer" Took used this massive club to win the Battle of Greenfields and defeat the Goblin warlord Golfimbul. Legend has it that one blow from the great club knocked the Goblin chief's head off and sent it sailing into a far-off rabbit hole — winning the battle and inventing the game of golf at the same time! At the end of the adventure, Bilbo will keep the club at Bag End for study, and he will later donate it to the Mathom-house of Michel Delving, for everyone to admire.



Teodor Milan Jovic #3151915

MOST EXCELLENT FIREWORKS

The fireworks were by Gandalf: they were not only brought by him, but designed and made by him; and the special effects, set pieces, and flights of rockets were let off by him.



Once again, the affairs of the Shire and those of Gandalf the Grey seem to be entwined. To better understand the nature of the Grey Pilgrim's wizardry — and for a bit of fun — Bilbo asks the conspirators to find out what became of the last of Gandalf's fireworks, left over from the Old Took's birthday parties. The conspirators must travel to the Yale and discover what became of them.

This adventure can be played at any time after the events of *A Conspiracy Most Cracked*, but before *Involuntary Postmen*. If played in sequence, it is now the summer of the year S.R. 1360.

PART ONE: UNEXPECTED PARTY FAVOURS

The conspirators are gathered in Bag End for yet another fine dinner on the lawn beside the Hill, when the horizon to the south-east suddenly lights up with a display of dazzling colours! You can see thin tendrils of smoke curling up in the darkening sky. Bilbo bolts upright and snaps his fingers.

"Those have to be Gandalf's old fireworks! What are they doing with them?" Before you can say so much as 'pop and hop,' Master Baggins is already planning a new mission, to set off and retrieve what he calls 'the last of Gandalf's party favours.' He informs you that years ago, Gandalf entrusted the remainder of his fireworks to none other than Primrose Boffin, now Bracegirdle, Lobelia's own mother. Primrose, who went to live in Hardbottle after her marriage, recently moved back to the Yale, where she was born, setting off all sorts of gossip. Now, judging by where those dazzling lights seemed to come from, someone in the Yale must have tried to put those fireworks to use again and may have set a fire going with them. Bilbo continues: "Fireworks are not things to be handled carelessly. And if they won't be responsible then I know a safe place for them!"

Balin, who has turned a visit for tea into a stay of several days, offers to join the Company as he'd like to get to know the Shire a bit more.

A YALE YARN

This adventure can dispense with the Hobbit walk required to bring the Player-heroes to their destination, by having them start the game already in the Yale. Their walk had them follow the East Road all the way to Whitfurrows.

After asking for directions several times (or following Lobelia's, if she's present), they reach the Boffin family estate late in the morning, several miles south along the road that leads from Whitfurrows to the Stock Road and the Woody End. It's a large farmstead, recently renovated, composed of a stately house surrounded by farm buildings, in the middle of wheat and barley fields and orchards. There are scorch marks in a couple of the fields and a larger one closer to the house. A rutted lane between low hedges leads to the front door.

Once they knock at the door, it flies open, and you see the rather sour face of Primrose Bracegirdle greeting you. "Aye, what do you want?"

As it is immediately clear, Primrose is not terribly glad to have visitors, not even her own daughter, especially after she's been wandering around the Shire in questionable Company. When asked about the fireworks, she says that her son Bruno came to visit last week and was fooling around with them. After Bruno set a few off to entertain the local children, she put a stop to all that nonsense and sent him back to Hardbottle to store the blasted things back at her husband's house. If they reveal that they have come so far specifically to retrieve the fireworks, Primrose assures them that possession is the greater part of the law, and if they want them, they'll have to buy them properly.

WALKS AND WANDERINGS IN WHITFURROWS

The trip back to Whitfurrows is an easy walk, but by the time the Player-heroes arrive, it is late afternoon, and most of the trading is done for the day. After a bit of looking and asking around among the throng of traders, they find Bruno drinking in the company of a Dwarf mason. Bruno is about fifty, and looks very much like a meaner and larger version of his younger sister Lobelia.

When asked about the fireworks, Bruno is initially adamant that he has no idea what they're talking about. He is suspicious of anything that has to do with 'Mad Baggins', and if Lobelia is present, he reprimands her for getting involved in such 'adventurous nonsense'.

> Bruno can be coerced into revealing the truth with a successful Skill roll (**AWE**, **PERSUADE**, or **RIDDLE** are all appropriate).

On a success, he tells the Player-heroes that he passed the fireworks off to one of the Hobbits working for his father Blanco — one Otho Sackville-Baggins, who agreed to take them back to Hardbottle, after a stop in Scary for a pint. If the roll is a failure, Bruno just says that he sent the fireworks home.

STORMS IN SCARY

Setting off north out of Whitfurrows and Budgeford, the Player-heroes begin their journey towards Scary late in the evening. If they want to catch up with Otho, they must press on for at least a few hours in the dark. Before long, the sky clouds over, and a heavy rain begins to fall.

> Slogging through the rain, even in a place as gentle as the Shire, is no comfortable task, and each of the Player-heroes will need to make a **TRAVEL** roll to stave off the weariness of a wet and cheerless evening, with failure resulting in gaining 2 Fatigue points.

With their slowed pace on the muddy road and a brief stop in an abandoned building to wait for the rain to cease, the conspirators arrive in Scary about one hour after dawn.

Scary is an unwelcoming village by Hobbit standards, nestled as it is on the south side of the Hills of Scary. It's populated by hard-working, no-nonsense Hobbits living in homes made of grey stone. Most folk are terse and a bit unkind, but if the Player-heroes ask around about other travellers from the south, they are told that the last visitor seen coming into town took a late bed at a building owned by some mining officials from Dwaling.

The building is a small, single-story house, with a couple of small bedrooms and a tiny common room containing three tables. When they get there, the conspirators find a Hobbit from Dwaling, a mining accountant by the name of Filibert Banks, busy scribbling in a large tome.

If questioned, Filibert seems to take for granted that the Hobbits are on some business errand, especially if he hears Lobelia's family name (the Bracegirdles have a flourishing local business in construction), and thus proves to be quite cooperative.

Teodor Milan Ivanov #3169135

Useful information can be extracted from Filibert with 3 successful Skill rolls, using any ability the conspirators and the Loremaster deem relevant.

The Player-heroes can play the conversation freely, but any Player-hero who fails a roll cannot make any more rolls to inquire further.

- Upon a first success, Filibert reveals that he and Otho had a long 'business' conversation while in their cups. Filibert told his roommate for the night that based on his accounting, there was a tunnel in the quarry that proved to be very fruitful, but that no one, not even Dwarves, had been able to penetrate it deeply, for the rock was too hard.
- On a second success, Filibert regales the Player-heroes with ghoulish tales about 'the lost miner' haunting that specific tunnel, stories of passages abandoned after flooding, and rumours of ghostly voices echoing in the empty chambers.
- A third and final success has Filibert relating how Otho, inebriated with Filibert's story of an untapped 'treasure mine', started blathering about how soon everyone in the Shire was going to be speaking to him with proper respect, while he kept patting the large sack he brought with him.

The final revelation from Filibert about Otho is that he stumbled off more than a bit tipsy a few hours before dawn, after having asked Filibert for directions to reach 'his treasure mine'. He left with a lantern, a tinderbox, a coil of rope, and his large sack.

Part Two: Quest in the Quarry

Having been mined by Hobbits since the days of Marcho and Blanco, the Hills of Scary are riddled with holes, tunnels, and all sorts of excavations. During the day, the area is bustling, with workers going in and out of their mines, or tending to the stone pulled from the quarries. Almost as grumpy as busy Dwarves, they have little news to offer to nosy strangers — no one seems to have seen Otho entering or leaving.

If the Player-heroes try to reach the 'treasure mine' openly, possibly following directions provided by Filibert, they soon discover that it's impossible to reach — as soon as they get near, they are stopped by mining officials and sent back to the village. After a brief investigation, it should be clear to the Player-heroes that slipping in during the day is impossible. Coming back after sunset seems to be the only way.

You wait for the sun to set. As you follow the rutted track that Filibert showed you, you get closer and closer to the dark that lies at the feet of the Hills of Scary. Here, the night air makes you shiver, as you carefully try not to stumble on the many broken rocks littering the path. In time, your eyes adjust and the outline of the hilltops appears, contrasting against the night sky. On the side of the hills, you make out the many tunnels gaping like bleak mouths leading into a seemingly impenetrable blackness.

It's a scary prospect to go underground at this hour of the night, but you must discover what happened to Otho Sackville-Baggins before it's too late.

Exploring the mines at night with only the light of a few lanterns is a daunting task. As a consequence, once the conspirators enter the dark beneath the hills, they must all pass a **VALOUR** roll to avoid losing 1 point of Hope.

A Sought-after Sackville

To find where the foolish Hobbit has gone, the Player-heroes must explore the branching tunnels of the 'treasure mine'.

The conspirators must choose one Player-hero as their guide in the tunnels — the guide can make a roll of **EXPLORE** once every hour.

To determine whether they find Otho, the Loremaster rolls a Success Die once for every successful **EXPLORE** Skill roll, adding 1 to the result for each Success icon ᛉ rolled by the Player-hero. Then, the Loremaster checks the roll result against the following entries.

1. **FORGOTTEN SUPPLIES.** You find a crude map of the mine left behind by some workers. Add 1 to the next roll.
2. **A NARROW SQUEEZE.** Maybe you shouldn't have had that extra morsel at breakfast! Squeezing through a particularly tight passage has led to scraped knees and torn knuckles. The guide loses 1 Endurance.
3. **AN ILL WIND.** A chill wind seems to sweep up the passage from nowhere, extinguishing your lanterns. Relighting them takes some time, but the long dark and flickering lights are disturbing and will require a **VALOUR** roll from everyone before the lanterns are relit (lose 1 Hope on a failure).
4. **SORROWFUL SONGS BENEATH THE STONE.** An indecipherable and ominous lament echoes across the stone and fades to nothing.

5. **A HORRIBLE END.** A broken pickaxe, a torn piece of cloth, and a smear of blood on the wall hint that some poor Hobbit miner met a terrible end.
6. You have found the lost Otho Sackville-Baggins! Go to *Mad as an Orc*, below.

MAD AS AN ORC

A flickering flame casts jagged shadows at the end of a passage that ends in a pile of tumbled rocks. The Player-heroes hear a mad cry echoing against the rock and into the darkness. As they round the corner, they see a lantern set upon a stone, casting long shadows over a terrible sight: a terrified Hobbit stands in front of a massive pile of fireworks piled up at the blocked end of a tunnel, feebly brandishing a shovel at what appears to be a grey Orc. Otho is screaming madly at the creature: *"It's my treasure, ye monster! Mine! Mine! I'll blow it to rubble before I let ye have it!"*

On your arrival, the Hobbit turns and screeches in renewed fright. He stiffens and stammers, failing to hide his abject panic. If the players don't act quickly, Otho will likely bury them all in the mine.

The Orc is a very decrepit Orc veteran, who was lost long ago, and took refuge deep in the mines and in the natural caves under the Hills of Scary. Since then, he has been hiding, trying to drive the Hobbits from his lair whenever they would come too close to discovering his presence. The players will have to take up arms to stop him from attacking Otho, an act that will most likely end in a quite spectacular explosion and the destruction of the mine.

At the arrival of the Player-heroes, the Orc turns his attention to the newly arrived threat and attacks. He will fight until Wounded or reduced to half or less of his Endurance before fleeing into the dark passages of the mine.

ORC VETERAN

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL	ENDURANCE	PARRY	ARMOUR
4	16	+2	3

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Jagged spear 3 (3/14)

Epilogue

If Otho is saved, the Player-heroes receive little thanks from the wayward Hobbit. Despite having his life spared by their timely arrival, Otho fully intends to stake his claim on this part of the mine. So, he proposes the following deal: if the conspirators agree to serve as witnesses to the signing of contracts giving Otho exclusive mining rights to the tunnel (seven signatures in red ink, all right and proper), he will give them half of the Wizard's excellent fireworks. If they agree, Otho informs them that he'll pass the contracts on for Lobelia to sign, and they can take half the fireworks with them to Bag End — he'll personally repay the Bracegirdles for the fireworks out of his own pocket.

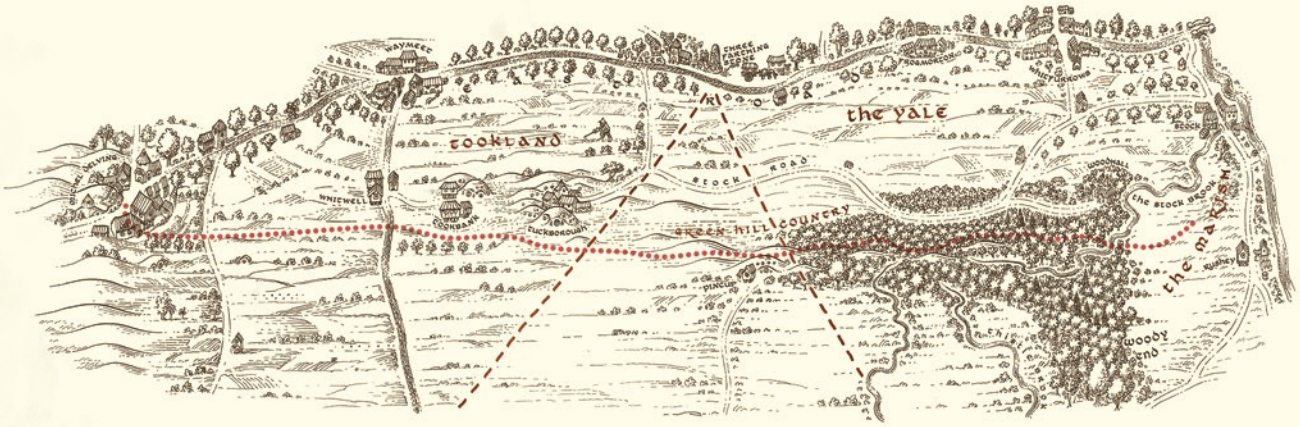
As for the Orc veteran, the Player-heroes can inform the mining officials of his presence. They will then investigate the mine and eventually discover a deep passage that was previously undiscovered, littered with bones of small animals and remnants of an encampment, but no signs of Orcs...

Upon their return to Bag End, Bilbo stores the remaining fireworks in one of his cellars, under lock and key.

Teodor Milan Ilanter #3549151

INVOLUNTARY POSTMEN

… the offices of Postmaster and First Shirriff were attached to the mayoralty, so that he managed both the Messenger Service and the Watch.



No trouble goes unnoticed in the Shire, and the Bounders have finally decided to take action against the conspirators and their ongoing mischief. By order of the Shirriffs, Bilbo Baggins' Hobbit collaborators have been sentenced to cleaning the cold storage and wine cellar underneath the Town Hole at Michel Delving! But the sympathies of an overworked member of the Quick Post and the promise to deliver a letter clear across the Shire to Brandy Hall could earn them early release, and a new adventure to boot!

This adventure can be played at any time after the events of *A Conspiracy Most Cracked*, immediately preceding *To Soothe a Savage Beast*. If played in sequence, it is now late summer, in the year S.R. 1360.

PART ONE: CAPTIVE CONSPIRATORS

This adventure opens with the Player-heroes (not including Bilbo or Balin) having already been rounded up by several local Bounders after news of their troublesome misadventures have turned the Shire into a buzz of concern and gossip. As time passed while they were wandering about, several Hobbits for whom they've caused trouble have reported on their misdeeds. This can include custodian Malva Slowfoot, Bounder Ada Burrows, Primrose and Bruno Bracegirdle, and any other busybodies they have disturbed during their adventures. Their troublesome ways have finally caught up with them!

This is intolerable! You always wanted to visit the Town Hole in Michel Delving, but not like this. It appears the conspirators have finally met one trouble they could not escape. After being confronted by a group of Bounders and charged with claims of disturbing the peace and on-going rowdiness, the lot of you have been detained in the storage tunnels beneath the Town Hole until Mayor Pott can decide what to do with you.

While there are worse things than being locked in a storage cellar beneath the Town Hole, it is an uncomfortable place. A heavy wooden door, barred from the other side, blocks you from freedom, and other than the occasional Bounder coming by, no one has so much as brought you a seed cake to munch on for hours! When Bilbo finds out about this, they will regret their actions… he will find out, right?

OUT OF THE CELLAR

The incarcerated conspirators take a few moments to investigate the storage cellar: they see a number of sealed beer barrels and several cuts of salted meat, inedible without preparation, and several large loaves of crusty bread and wheels of hard cheese (the Loremaster should note if any Player-heroes take some of the foodstuffs as it may become relevant later in the adventure).

The ground here is packed dirt, and the walls are the same, save for a few support beams. A single, weak lantern is set on one of the barrels for light (using it to start a fire in the middle of Michel Delving is probably not the best idea). Their usual possessions and any weapons have naturally been taken from them by the Bounders, and have been stored in

Tendar Mithril (guest) #3640951

Odo Proudfoot

the corridor outside the cellar door (the gear can be easily retrieved if they find a way to get out).

The conspirators remain here without news from outside long enough to make them despair about their fate. Just when they are getting too restless, a soft knock is heard at the door and a reluctant voice hisses out. Awkwardly, the voice introduces itself as Odo Proudfoot. They recognize the name as belonging to someone working for the Quick Post in Michel Delving. Odo asks if he can come in, which will likely seem strange to the company, seeing as the door handle is on his side.

THE LETTER TO BAMFURLONG

Hobbits have a great respect for propriety and privacy, and that includes matters of the Quick Post. The letter is sealed by wax, but has no symbol set into the seal. Player-heroes would know that opening the letter would be a most improper invasion of privacy, and the misdeed would cost them 1 point of Hope

If he receives a positive response, he and Mayor Pott step within the chamber. He leaves the door open, allowing the characters to see their gear stacked up neatly against the wall. Odo explains that the Quick Post is short-handed and he has a letter that needs delivering to Bamfurlong, in the Marish.

He has no one to send and got the impression from the tall, hooded figure that accosted him outside town with the letter that the message was urgent. Furthermore, there's a lot of traffic on the main road – Dwarves mostly, heading west or east as the case may be, trying to get home before the year grows too long.

The Mayor speaks up, saying that the conspirators owe community service for their transgressions and that they have been volunteered to deliver the letter, 'unless you'd rather stay here.'

If they accept, then Odo hands them the sealed letter, instructing them to take it to Bamfurlong, staying off the East Road and taking the Stock Road instead, thus cutting across the Green Hills and going through the Woody End.

Before he lets them go, Odo adds that he promised the hooded figure that the letter would stay sealed — only to be opened by Farmer Maggot, to whom it is addressed.

LEAVING MICHEL DELVING

Once the characters gather up the gear, Mayor Pott leads them back upstairs and out through the Mathom-house. Player-heroes who mention that they are scouting for anything of use notice that a series of strange, two-wheeled contraptions made of wood and metal have been lined up against the wall of the Mathom-house — certainly some newly-delivered acquisitions of the museum. Malva Slowfoot has labeled them with a tag, identifying each one as a 'velocipede'.

Whether they're a strange creation by some eccentric Shire craftsman or a Dwarven smith, these velocipedes look like vehicles that can be ridden at some speed! Mayor Pott harrumphs if the player-heroes ask to use the velocipedes; he reminds them that they are doing community service and he expects them to suffer, at least a little bit.

If the Player-heroes 'borrow' the velocipedes to leave Michel Delving in a hurry, they must pass a roll of **ATHLETICS** to master the strange contraptions without anyone noticing their clumsy attempt. A failure indicates that some local takes notice of the Player-heroes' suspicious activities, and the theft of the velocipedes is added to the conspirators list of misdeeds!

If the Player-heroes leave Michel Delving riding the velocipedes, whenever they must make a roll of **TRAVEL** they *gain (1d)*.

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PART TWO: ROUND AND ROUND

Having escaped Michel Delving, the Player-heroes now begin their journey east towards the Marish and Bamfurlong. Normally, such a trip should take about four or five days to complete, and require the rules for Hobbit Walks described on page 10 of *The Shire*. But while the Shire is a peaceful land free of many of the troubles that plague other regions, travelling across its length is not without its own challenges.

From your first hours on the road, you realise that what Odo told you seems right — more Bounders than usual are out making their rounds. So, you have no other choice than to stay off the roads. This means riding along well-trodden country paths and tracks, heading east towards Whitwell, and Tookland beyond.

But what could be little more than an extended walking party soon proves troublesome... You have set out on your postman duties across the Shire without provisions, save for a few bits of old and stale bread and cheese from beneath the Town Hole of Michel Delving, and this is a problem of capital import!

The first day of travel brings the Player-heroes to the outskirts of Tookbank — they may consider the possibility of sneaking into town and purloining something to eat — but that is a risky business. Alternatively, they can search for wild fruits and berries growing in the open land, or even attempt to 'borrow' carrots or other choice vegetables from one of the many farms of Tookland. Hunting small game is right out, given that the tiny creatures found in the region are not likely to make more than a mouthful even if they could be snared.

On their second day of travel, dawn comes bright and clear, with all indications that it will be a perfectly fine day for walking. However, as midday draws near, the sky turns grey, and heavy clouds roll in. By the time lunch has passed, a heavy rainstorm has released its fury, and the Player-heroes find themselves trudging through muddy terrain as they head towards the Green Hill Country.

Each Player-hero gains 2 additional points of Fatigue as the weight of hard travel begins to press down upon them, body and soul (a roll of TRAVEL can reduce the amount of points gained, as usual).

The rain subsides at sunset, and soon the night sky clears. Plodding in the dark on hilly terrain is not a wise idea, and while the Player-heroes might press on into the Woody End that evening, it is probably best that they bed down for the night. Just as they are about to sleep for the evening, a pair of red squirrels wander curiously into their camp, and try to steal some food from the travellers. If shooed away rudely, they flee into the woods, but if treated kindly or even offered a bit of food by the Hobbits, they take a few bites off whatever they are offered, chitter excitedly, and flee into the woods.

As the Player-heroes enter the Woody End itself on their third day of travelling, the Loremaster must consider how the Player-heroes interacted with the beasts they have encountered in their adventures so far. This includes Firework the dog from *A Conspiracy Most Cracked*, Gertrude the mule and the owl in Waymeet, and the curious squirrel couple encountered the previous evening. Word of their actions has spread among these creatures across the Shire, and now their reputation precedes them.

If in the majority of cases the animals were treated kindly and shown compassion, then the Player-heroes find their journey in the forest light and easy, discovering convenient berry bushes along the road, allowing them to eat, and finding the finch songs reaching into their heart restoring 1 point of Hope to each of them.

FINDING FOOD TO GO

The Loremaster can resolve any foraging action attempted by the Player-heroes as follows (each player has one Skill roll attempt each day of travel):

- Player-heroes attempting to sneak into a village to steal food must make a STEALTH roll, but they lose 1 Hope when they do so!
- Those searching the wilderness for wild fruit can make an EXPLORE roll.
- Anyone looking for a vegetable field to pluck a cabbage or two from can make a SCAN roll, but they *lose (1d)* as they must cover large areas.

Success means they have found enough food for themselves for one day. Each Success icon ᘐ yields enough food to feed themselves for an additional day — or to feed themselves and another Hobbit.

Any Player-hero who goes to bed each day with an empty belly gains 1 point of Fatigue, in addition to whatever is gained for travelling, and must make a WISDOM roll to avoid losing 1 Hope as they suffer the incomprehensible fate of going to bed with no supper.

If the animals were treated poorly, the forest is oppressive: the sounds of the beasts and birds have a dour and unwelcome note to them, and each day of travel in the Woody End requires a VALOUR roll to avoid losing 1 Hope.

PART THREE: ENCHANTMENT IN THE WOODY END

As the Player-heroes reach the eastern edge of the Woody End and they hear the babbling waters of the Stock-brook, a new enchantment reveals itself.

The stars burn bright and free tonight, in spite of your weariness and the hunger you have faced along your journey. A lightness enters your heart as you rest upon the banks of the Stock-brook. Then, as if the starlight were given form and voice, you see a being from legend step out of the soft embrace of night to shine upon you. A voice like music says "Elen síla lúmenn' omentielvo."

As if given form by that song, you see an Elf, clad in blue raiment with hair as fair as gold. He smiles at you and your companions, "Whether it be a merry chance or some greater will that has brought us together, I am glad for it. I am Galdor of the Havens, and I have long been curious about the mischievous Hobbits that have been going about causing all manner of stories to be spun by birds and beasts across the Shire. Why, I spoke only a few days ago to Badger-brock of the Withywindle, and he told me of your company, each by name, as he had heard it from a finch, who heard it from a fox. I suspect that by now, even Iarwain in the Old Forest has heard of your merry mishaps. But I am forgetting myself, adopting rustic ways for these rustic realms. May I trade some simple Elvish travelling fare in exchange for sharing your Company and your camp this evening?"

If the Player-heroes accept Galdor's Company, he does indeed provide them with loaves of fair white bread and a light, golden beverage.

The Elvish provisions restore both heart and spirit, restoring each Player-hero to their full Endurance, cancelling all accumulated Fatigue, and restoring 1 point of Hope each, as they fill bellies and lift spirits.

Galdor is a kind but curious guest, and subtly questions the Player-heroes. This attempt goes unnoticed unless a Player-hero succeeds in an INSIGHT roll. If they fail, he draws the truth of their adventures from them — but he offers laughter, a light heart, and a fair song in return for this information. He tells them to sleep peacefully tonight, for they have nothing to fear.

When the Hobbits wake in the morning, they find fresh fruit and nuts to serve as breakfast, and Galdor is already awake. He tells them that he has an errand to attend to, and must now depart. He offers them blessings and cautions regarding further adventures. Moments later, he vanishes into the forest of the Woody End.

Galdor of the Havens

Teodor Milan Iordan #3151915

Farmer Maggot

Epilogue

Later that same day, the conspirators finally cross the Stockbrook at a spot where it meanders shallowly and can be forded. After having asked some fishermen for directions, the Player-heroes arrive that afternoon at Bamfurlong in the Marish.

Bamfurlong is a long brick farmhouse with a thatched roof, surrounded by great fields of vegetables in their full bloom of the season which run up to a high wall with a gate that marks the entrance upon the lane. It is located approximately halfway between Stock and Rushey.

As the Player-heroes approach, they see a young but broad Hobbit in his tweens working the fields, and stopping to watch them closely as he leans upon a shovel. Upon spotting the Player-heroes, he shoulders the shovel, saunters towards them, and tersely asks them their business. He regards them cautiously, one by one. He offers them nothing but a stern look and his name, Farmer Maggot, dismissing them out of hand unless they mention that they carry a letter for him. He asks them to produce the letter, which he snatches from them and tears open on the spot. After reading a few lines, he lets out a deep laugh, and seems to relax into an amiable Hobbit.

"I was told you were coming, but I wasn't sure I would have actually seen you in the flesh. It's quite a long road from Michel Delving! Please, please, follow me. You must be hungry, and thirsty, and quite weary by the look of you."

Farmer Maggot invites the conspirators to follow him to his home, where he leads them into his kitchen. There, they see a fine table has been laid, and none other than Bilbo Baggins himself sits at it, eating a bright-coloured apple!

Bilbo smiles impishly at Maggot, and winks at the Player-heroes.

"Oh, I see you got my letter, good Mister Maggot! Now that we're all here, we'll get to the business at hand!"

TO SOOTHE A SAVAGE BEAST

There was victory and defeat; and towers fell,
fortresses were burned, and flames went up into the sky.

One final favour, and Bilbo will leave his beloved conspirators in peace. He joins them for a visit with young Farmer Maggot, freshly of Bamfurlong, as he is a shrewd farmer with much insight into the misunderstood ways of Bucklanders. But Maggot has his own troubles with a terrible beast from over the High Hay, and before long, the conspirators find themselves in the heart of the Old Forest after dark and face to face with the true wonder and danger that awaits when simple Hobbits move beyond the borders of the Shire.

This adventure should be played as the last one taken from this volume. If played in sequence, summer is now waning, in the year S.R. 1360.

Having arrived before the others at Bamfurlong, Bilbo returns as a playable Player-hero available to the players. If they need to swap out an existing character it is recommended that Lobelia be the one to leave the conspirators — clearly having had more than enough of this nonsense, and quite infuriated to have anything to do with Bucklanders and any business beyond the Shire proper, she returns to her mother's home in the Yale.

PART ONE: BUCKLAND BOUND

The adventure opens with the Player-heroes awakening once again in comfortable beds inside the farmhouse of Bamfurlong to the scent of eggs and mushrooms cooking for a late breakfast. The last few days have been a welcome comfort after their long journey across the Shire.

The Loremaster should restore each character to their full Endurance, as they have had a few days to rest.

Bilbo and Maggot both dismiss any 'business talk' until after the table has been cleared, but soon after the crockery has been cleaned and pipes have been lit, Maggot's demeanour turns grim.

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

Sitting upon a long bench under the eaves of Bamfurlong, Farmer Maggot takes a long draw from his pipe and gazes out to a small ruined building on the far side of his wide farmlands. "Chickens," he says suddenly as he blows out a long line of blue-grey smoke. "It is because of my chickens that I sent my letter, Master Baggins."

Any hint of jest fades away as he leans in to you and your friends. "And to be honest, I'm glad you have not come alone. When I saw that thing that night, blood in its teeth and fire in its eyes, I knew it was something beyond the ken of myself or any other folk in the Eastfarthing. It was a beast, I tell you, and not some hungry wolf that came up from Dunland starving. This was a black thing, as if its fur had been burnt like kindling, with nothing natural about it, and it set chills down my spine — no easy task, mind you. But when I heard it growl at me, we locked eyes and I saw naught but a lust for death in its gaze. It meant to kill more than my chickens in their coop that night. I grabbed a lantern in one hand you see, and my chopping axe. If it was going to take me, I wasn't going down without a fight. Before I knew what happened, it was on me, crossing the field in a bound and pinning me to the soil, snarling and slavering."

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Maggot's eyes glaze over in memory and you see him tremble at the recollection. "In a fit, I swung my lantern up and it shattered, pouring oil upon its muzzle. It yelped and screamed as the fire blazed, and it fled into the dark. The last things I saw before it disappeared towards the Brandywine were those horrible, fiery eyes."

He sets his pipe on the bench beside him. "It's still out there. I swear I've seen it beyond the edges of Bamfurlong on more than one night since then, those eyes burning into me from the dark. And if the stirrings from Buckland are any hint, it is causing no end of trouble there too. Master Bilbo, sir, I was hoping that you and your friends here might help me and the Buckland folk put a stop to that foul thing's hunting before it gets a taste for something more than chickens."

Maggot has little to offer in reward for their aid, but will give the conspirators a bed at Bamfurlong should ever they need it in days to come, and send them off with a basket of his mushrooms, which can serve as fine provender as they search for the 'Burnt Beast', as he calls it, with a promise of more any time they wish after the matter is settled.

Finally, Maggot adds that he only ever saw the beast at night, and he believes it has somehow crossed over to Buckland and is troubling the Brandybucks now, based on news he's heard from Bucklebury. They might want to begin their search for the creature by crossing the Brandywine at Bucklebury Ferry, and should probably depart this same evening.

UP THE CAUSEWAY TO BUCKLEBURY FERRY

The trip up the Causeway to reach Bucklebury Ferry is an easy one, but the evening air feels strangely still. No Hobbits are seen relaxing out of doors on their farms in the Marish, and no children are found catching fireflies.

One hour later, about halfway to the Ferry, the Player-heroes feel a growing sense of dread creeping over them, as if a rabbit were sensing a nearby predator. It's a disheartening feeling, seeping into their very bones.

> As they continue on, any Player-hero who states that they are looking around for a source of the dread can attempt an AWARENESS roll. Failure means they are unable to spot something specific that is causing their unease, but those who are successful see a pair of red eyes here and there. Once behind a fence, another time obscured by a row of hedges, and again slipping away behind a small house.

Upon finally reaching the winding road that turns east off the Causeway, they begin walking down the path towards Bucklebury Ferry. Indeed, they can see it for themselves in the distance, illuminated by starlight reflected in the Brandywine River.

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

At last this uneasy night stroll reaches its destination. You see as you turn off the Causeway, further down the lane, the square floating platform that is the Bucklebury Ferry. With no ferryman tending it at night, you will have to cross on your own, but the water is calm, and the stars are bright. A sigh of released tension is prematurely interrupted when you see a pair of red eyes come up from the ditch along the western side of the Causeway.

It may have once been a dog or wolf, but its fur is burnt and stiff, the colour of cold ashes. Fiery eyes gleam in the night as it prowls towards you, never flinching. Its predatory confidence grows with each step. Never once does it make a sound, not even its footfalls. Nearly as tall as a Hobbit at the shoulder, its silent snarl reveals white fangs stained pink, as it breaks into a charge towards you!

This is a true battle. The Player-heroes have little time to prepare for it, and indeed it might be wiser for them to consider the option of escaping, for example using the Ferry.

> Racing down the road and leaping onto the ferry requires an **ATHLETICS** roll, and the choice of whether to stand and fight or flee must be made quickly.

The Loremaster should press the players, and force them to make their choice swiftly. Those who fail their roll to flee fall behind and become a prime target for the terrible black beast.

> Player-heroes who muster their courage and decide to stand and fight in hopes of delaying the creature or protecting their friends can manage one Opening Volley before the beast is upon them. If the creature takes 10 or more points of damage, it turns and flees, leaping over the far side of the Causeway and disappearing into the night.

Once the characters have begun their crossing, keen eyes gazing back upon the western bank of the Brandywine River and succeeding in an **AWARENESS** roll to notice a pair of red eyes watching them from the darkness, before the beast darts to the north along the river bank.

BURNT BEAST

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL 5

ENDURANCE	PARRY	ARMOUR
20	+2	3

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Fangs 4 (5/14)

FELL ABILITIES: ***Great Leap.*** The Burnt Beast can attack any Player-hero, in any combat stance.
Denizen of the Dark. All attack rolls made by the Burnt Beast are *Favoured* while in darkness.

PART TWO: BUCKLAND TROUBLES

After crossing the Brandywine, the Player-heroes enter Buckland and head towards Brandy Hall in the late hours of the night. Right after leaving the ferry, they are approached by a Bucklander watchman carrying a lantern, with his other hand resting on the pommel of a sheathed short sword. He is terse with the Player-heroes, telling them that they shouldn't be using the ferry at night, and that any strangers are to be escorted to Brandy Hall for their own safety. He offers to guide them the rest of the way. If they refuse, he insists, saying it's the Master of Buckland's orders.

> While walking to Brandy Hall, any Player-heroes that ask the guard what is causing the extra security measures must make a **COURTESY** roll to get him to open up — though no roll is necessary if Rory or Primula Brandybuck are among the Player-heroes present. If successful, he introduces himself as Braddoc, and reveals that there are rumours of a savage creature threatening the locals. If they roll one or more ᘔ icons, he tells them some kind of wild dog matching the description of the beast was seen prowling around Crickhollow, terrorizing the area.

Upon arriving at Brandy Hall, the Player-heroes are given a chance to rest and recount their troubles. The Master of Buckland himself, Gorbadoc Brandybuck, comes to hear their tale, for it concerns him greatly, as Rory and Primula are his children and Drogo is to be his son by marriage.

Loremasters can read or paraphrase the following text to open the scene.

Braddoc the watchman leads you up the road and to the main entrance of the grand Hobbit-hole that is Brandy Hall. Much to your surprise, given the time of night, you see none other than the Master of Buckland, Gorbadoc Brandybuck himself, pacing on the front walk. Pipe clenched in his teeth and leaning on a heavy wooden cudgel, he looks up at the light of Braddoc's lantern and smiles. "Glad to see you, my lads and lasses."

Trouble is visible on Gorbadoc's face, but he waves it away after offering Braddoc a quick thank you and asking the group if they'd like to come in for some late-night vittles. Once they've all sat down at the table, Gorbadoc assures everyone that they'll have proper lodging for the night. It's only then that he brings up the subject of the creature, asking anyone injured in their previous encounter with the beast where they got their wounds. He tells them that the

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Gorbadoc Brandybuck

beast has been prowling about Buckland as well, and it troubles him to hear it's somehow crossed the Brandywine — such a thing makes no sense to him, as the creature was only spotted last night, and he finds it hard to believe that the beast swam the length of the Brandywine and then back again to trouble Farmer Maggot.

The beast, Gorbadoc tells them, has been taking livestock from Newbury, and just last night Rollo Boffin sounded the alarm, claiming he saw the beast on the edge of his property at Crickhollow. He fears it's only a matter of time before the creature hurts someone.

Before going to bed, Gorbadoc adds that even as Master of Buckland, he's got no right to tell others how to live, but if they're going to stick their nose into this matter they'd best be careful.

CRISIS AT CRICKHOLLOW

An hour before dawn Saradas Brandybuck (brother of Rory and Primula) wakes the Player-heroes, and tells them that there's been another attack. Rollo Boffin came running from Crickhollow all the way to Brandy Hall, screaming that he'd seen the beast again, and that this time the thing had been snarling at his very window. Saradas tells the Player-heroes that Gorbadoc is asleep, and he didn't want to wake the old Master, so he came and got them instead.

Saradas leads them to a parlour in Brandy Hall where the newly arrived Rollo is sitting with shaking hands, nursing a cup of tea. Fearfully, and with stumbling words, Rollo describes the beast he saw, with fur burnt black and red fiery eyes, stalking back and forth near the edge of his property. He panicked and fled, running as fast as he could until he reached Brandy Hall. He begs the conspirators to help him.

When Rollo's story ends, the players turn to see Gorbadoc who has been standing in the doorway listening quietly. With a reluctant look upon his face, he nods, saying Rollo is right. He needs to keep the watchmen here and it's only proper that the Player-heroes investigate since they've encountered the creature before. Once all is agreed upon, if Drogo is in the Company, then Gorbadoc puts a hand on his shoulder and tells him "Thank you, son. For what you're doing for my family and my daughter. You and your family will always have a room at Brandy Hall."

The characters arrive at Crickhollow after a brief early morning walk from Brandy Hall a few miles away, but find no damage to the house itself. Anyone who searches the property discovers signs of disturbance — trampled flower beds, bark ripped from trees as if by animal claws, the carcasses of a few dead rabbits, and most disturbing of all, great gouges in the rear door of Rollo Boffin's house.

> Anyone who makes a **SCAN** roll spots a small trail leading towards the eastern end of the property that appears to dip and run to the very High Hay itself. Once they get near it, the Player-heroes get the uncanny sense that they are being watched.

It is then that the beast strikes again! Leaping from a long shadow cast by the rising sun against the High Hay, the horrid creature lunges at the nearest Player-hero! But the creature is not moving in for the kill — after a single successful attack or after being hit, the beast runs down the narrow path to the end of the property and disappears.

The path from Crickhollow to the High Hay dips very low as it goes on for some time, eventually coming to a brick lined gap in the Hedge where it ends in a set of thick iron bars. Though once forming a sturdy barrier, the gate appears to have been bent and twisted by some creature from the Old Forest trying to get in.

Careful examination of the gate via a **HUNTING** or **SCAN** roll reveals a few tufts of black fur caught in a hinge. It is clear

that the black beast came this way, from somewhere inside the Old Forest. If they do not dare to take the hunt for the terrible creature into such a gloomy and dangerous place, it will only continue to plague the people of the Eastfarthing for countless nights to come.

Part Three: The Old Forest

The Player-heroes have now truly passed beyond the safety of the Shire. After slipping through the tiny iron gate beneath the High Hay and into the Old Forest proper, they catch their first full look at this strange and legendary wood.

The Old Forest. Countless tales are told, from Buckland to the White Downs, about the strange affairs of this untamed wild. To your surprise, the forest itself does not immediately leap out and attack you as soon as you step past the bent iron gate and fully into the woods.

Instead, a thin collection of trees, bent and gnarled, surrounds you, just out of reach, their full branches not quite touching you. A wide path, barely visible from the gate, runs east and slightly to the north, over a low rise where you see a break in the trees. After a brief walk through moss-covered trees growing in countless shapes and sizes, you come to a wide, bare space where no trees grow. It forms a wide circle, and the sun reaches down, unobscured by the thick canopy of reaching branches and wide leaves.

Beyond this, the Old Forest grows thick and free. Trees, gnarled and twisted, with great roots sticking up from the ground and dipping back down again, grow freely, and there is little in the way of a path as the ground continues a slow ascent, and the sense that you are an unwanted visitor and are being watched grows in your mind. In this wild and twisted place, it is clear that the Burnt Beast will have the advantage, and your hunt will be most difficult.

Player-heroes asking the Loremaster what they know about tales of the Old Forest may make a **LORE** roll. With a success, they learn that rumour has it that the forest is alive and actively dislikes visitors, with some believing that the trees themselves actually move to obstruct travellers with twisting roots and tangling branches. Long ago some Hobbits actually drove the Old Forest back when the wood itself moved and tried to attack the hedge. Bucklanders travelled beyond the High Hay and drove it away with fire. One or more ᘔ icons include knowledge that the Old Forest is said to be the home of a wandering spirit that speaks to trees and bends the beasts that live in it to his will.

The Hunt for the Burnt Beast

The Loremaster should ask the players which one (and only one) of the Player-heroes will act as the scout for the group. The scout is in charge of trying to maintain orientation and prevent them from getting lost in the strange and shifting Old Forest. All Player-heroes not serving as the scout are instead searching for signs of the beast's passage as hunters. This could include tufts of fur, blood, or paw prints. There is no limit to the number of Player-heroes attempting to track the beast, though no character can be both scout and hunter.

The scout must make a single **EXPLORE** roll, while the hunters must accumulate 3 successful **HUNTING** rolls. If the **EXPLORE** roll fails, the **HUNTING** rolls *lose (1d)*; if it succeeds with one or more ᘔ icons, they *gain (1d)* instead.

On any failed **HUNTING** roll, the Loremaster must roll a Feat Die to determine what type of strange encounter occurs, using the table found on page 49 of *The Shire*. Likewise, for every couple of hours of searching, if the Player-heroes have not rolled 3 successes, the Loremaster rolls on the table again.

Once the required **HUNTING** successes have been reached, the Company finds the Burnt Beast, which prowls near the banks of the Withywindle, prepared to ambush the characters. Go to Part Four.

Angering the Old Forest

Player-heroes who brandish axes or speak ill of the forest may find the trees treat them with even more contempt and malice than before. Insults and threats spoken aloud in the Old Forest can make this journey even more dangerous, and the Loremaster should consider increasing the number of **HUNTING** rolls required by 1 if they speak so foolishly.

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Part Four: Burning Battle

The Player-heroes have finally cornered the Burnt Beast, and can put an end to the troubles it is bringing to the Eastfarthing!

The thick woodland opens ever so slightly to reveal a great thorn thicket that is impossibly large and twisted. From under the strangling vines, you see a familiar pair of burning eyes, as the Burnt Beast slithers forth from the darkness. An instant later, a chill runs down your spine, as a second pair of eyes appears in the darkness only a moment before another of these horrid creatures comes forth, intent on devouring you and your friends. It is not one of these shadowed predators prowling the Old Forest, but a fierce mated pair that has been cornered and driven to defend the bramble-ridden thorn hedge they've taken as home. They leap forward, prepared to finish you and your friends off now that there are no people of the Shire to hear your screams.

The Burnt Beasts, now revealed to be a pair and not a singular creature, are cornered and threatened, fighting fiercely. More dangerous than anything the conspirators have faced so far, this seems a true life-or-death situation — the Burnt Beasts have drawn the Player-heroes out of the Shire and into their territory.

The Loremaster should refer to the stats presented on page 27 for both Burnt Beasts.

Ancient Songs and New Friends

Fortunately, all the commotion going on in the Old Forest has not gone unnoticed. Depending on how the Player-heroes have acted through the course of their adventures, aid may soon arrive to help them in this dire time.

After a number of rounds of battle, Tom Bombadil arrives and chases away the beasts. The number of rounds is equal to 6, minus 1 for each instance that the Player-heroes have shown kindness to the animal inhabitants of the Shire (including, but not limited to, the owl at Waymeet, Firework the dog, the Squirrels of Woody End, etc.).

If the Player-heroes defeat the Burnt Beasts before Tom's arrival, this changes little, and the situation still plays out narratively as before. They simply flee into the forest and Tom arrives moments later.

Breaking through your fear and weariness, you hear a strange voice rise, and the black beasts draw back from you, looking towards the sound. Dancing as though at a spring festival, you see a wanderer merrily skipping about in yellow boots. Taller than a Hobbit, though not as tall as a Man, his face sports a careful smile, and he sweeps off his great floppy hat with a bow to you, and then again to the two beasts! Rising again, replacing his hat and straightening his blue jacket, he speaks in a kind of sing-song rhyme.

"Hey ho, silly ho, tramp across the forest
Little creatures under foot, black dogs are the sorest
Go now, silly dogs, cast away your ire
Hobbits only hope to help,
Come now, little dogs, no need to be so dire"

Tom prances over to the Player-heroes, and the Burnt Beasts break off their attack and flee from his presence. He pays them little heed for his part, much more interested in the Player-heroes. Instead, he sings his brief rhyme and then merrily bids the Hobbits to follow him to his house, where they can find refreshment and recover. (The Loremaster can read more about Tom Bombadil on page 51 of *The Shire*).

While the Player-heroes rest for the evening in the House of Bombadil, Tom reveals what he knows about the true nature of the Burnt Beasts: They were once hounds owned by a lord of Men, residing long ago in a tower of stone which rose among the hills which are now known as the Barrow-downs, beyond the Old Forest. In a time of terrible war, the lord perished among the flames, and his faithful hounds with him. When evil spirits descended upon the Barrow-downs, many years later, the hounds returned as dark reflections of what they once were.

They are now terrible creatures, but yet, they are not entirely evil, says Tom — something of their faithful nature remains, and they seldom attempt to kill. But their malice is growing year after year, as if the ill-will of the Old Forest itself is slowly taking over. Can it be that something can be done to remind them of what it means to be steadfast and true? Can they be given peace? Perhaps, Tom asks, if the Player-heroes are willing to help them find their way back to being fine companion hounds, they could be released from their wretched state.

If the Player-heroes agree, Tom tells them that the Burnt Beasts must be again given proper names, and if the Player-heroes will give them such names, the true and loyal nature

of their hearts can perhaps be restored. When asked why Tom couldn't name them himself, he says:

"Tom doesn't fear the hounds, and the hounds leave Tom be, my merries! Listen to Old Tom's songs and sing them back, recalling hearth and home. Gentle voices and kind souls will cast away the doom."

Tom teaches them several of his strange songs, as if they were simple children's rhymes, then merrily bids the characters get a good night's rest in his home. Come dawn, they can set out with a song in their hearts to restore the Burnt Beasts.

RETURN TO THE LAIR

At dawn, the Player-heroes awake to find Tom has gone out to collect river lilies for his wife. Goldberry tells the Player-heroes that the Burnt Beasts are still prowling around their lair in the nearby thorny thicket. Upon returning to the thicket, the Player-heroes spot the mated pair of creatures at once. They move to attack as soon as the conspirators arrive.

Though the Player-heroes can kill the Burnt Beasts with their weapons, their death is not permanent. They will rise again, and return to plague the Shire, unless they are slain using blades of Westernesse or similar magical weapons. Instead, some among the Player-heroes must hold off the savage beasts while others sing the songs they learned from Bombadil.

> This requires the conspirators to pass 3 SONG rolls. Any number of Player-heroes not engaged with the Burnt Beasts can sing.

If successful, the Burnt Beasts become light of heart, as all darkness and sorrow is washed away from their spirit. At that point, the Player-heroes can give them a name. Once the power of Tom's song and their new names have taken hold, the ashen features of the Burnt Beasts fade away, and their eyes brighten from fiery red to a gentle colour. The hounds, joyful, cheerful creatures once more, run away to play on the paths of the Old Forest, running beyond the edge of the Player-heroes' sight.

EPILOGUE

Having released the hounds from their curse, the Player-heroes make their way through the Old Forest back towards the Shire, and oddly enough, the woods do not seem to impede their travel. Once back in Buckland, the Player-heroes are given a warm welcome by Gorbadoc, and another night of fine eating and resting before crossing the Brandywine back into the Marish.

The Loremaster can read or paraphrase the following text.

You arrive at Maggot's house just in time for dinner, and find the farmer intent on rebuilding his chicken coop. As you greet Maggot, to your surprise and amazement the once-cursed dogs appear out of nowhere and run to Maggot, barking merrily. At first, the farmer is a bit fearful, but both dogs tackle him and begin to lick him and play with him. Slowly, Maggot's demeanour changes, and he begins to pet and play with them. In time, Maggot gently brings them to heel and calls you to join him for dinner.

As you sit at the dinner table, Maggot asks if these fine beasts have names. You recount what happened in the Old Forest, and as you do so, you realize that the friendliness of the two dogs towards Maggot must be a sort of gift from Tom — could it be that they know each other?

Over a hearty home-cooked meal, Maggot says that he was not one to keep beasts around, but these dogs seem rather fond of him, and they might make fine breeding stock for years to come. If any fierceness remains in their hearts, they'll be fine protectors for his family. He thanks the Player-heroes for their aid and asks them if they'll stay for the night.

Come morning, Bilbo declares that he has had a wonderful little adventure, and enough proper research has been gathered for his book. He kindly thanks the Player-heroes for their involvement and declares that they all shall be invited to the next great party he throws, and every party to come.

As time goes on, Bilbo becomes more reclusive, and the other Hobbits return to their lives. Gossip regarding their mischief fades away over the years, and life once again returns to normal in the Shire, for a few years at least...

Teodor Milan Iorga #3151915

He looked at maps, and wondered what lay beyond their edges: maps made in the Shire showed mostly white spaces beyond its borders.

This page marks the end of your adventures in the Shire for the moment! You can continue by creating your own, using the information contained in *The Shire*. You can further widen your exploration of Middle-earth with the second edition of *The One Ring* roleplaying game.

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